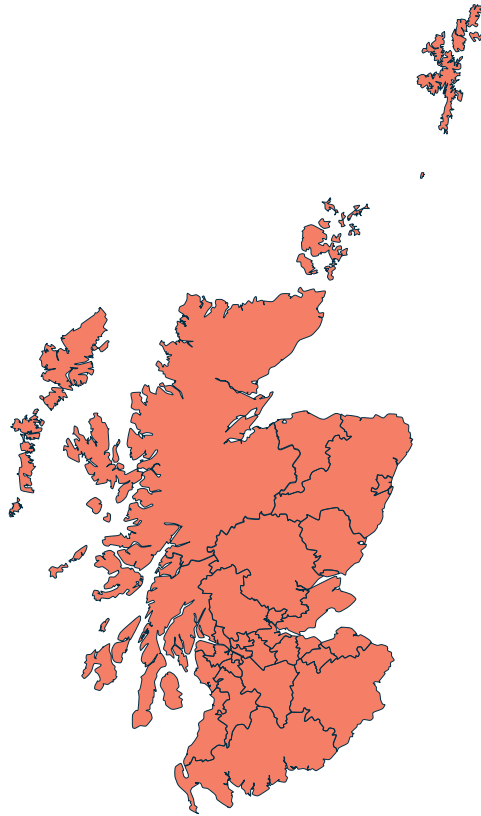


Building climate resilience across Scotland's cultural estate



LOCATION: Scotland

DATE: August 2026

OUTCOME:  Climate Change

Background

Scotland's cultural and creative organisations are at the heart of communities, operating from theatres, arts centres, studios, galleries and community venues across the country. However, many of these buildings are ageing, exposed to increasing climate risks and often lack the technical capacity inhouse to identify vulnerabilities, develop practical adaptation projects or secure investment.

Traditional capital funding routes frequently favour fully developed projects, creating a gap where smaller, targeted interventions could make a significant difference in protecting buildings, safeguarding cultural services and supporting the communities that rely on them.

Recognising this challenge, Creative Scotland established a £400,000 Pathfinder Climate Adaptation Fund, supported by The National Lottery, and partnered with Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) to transform the ambition into a practical, evidence-led programme. Rather than simply distributing grant funding, the programme was designed as an action-research pathfinder, testing how targeted investment, technical support and structured learning could strengthen the resilience of Scotland's cultural estate while building evidence to inform future investment.



Pictured left to right: Màiri McAllan MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic, Jeanie Scott, CEO of Dance Base and Karen Ridgewell, Climate Emergency and Sustainability Lead at Creative Scotland, Peter Reekie, CEO of SFT and Marc Cairns, Associate Director at SFT

Actions undertaken

As programme co-designer, delivery partner, technical adviser and critical friend, SFT worked closely with Creative Scotland to develop and deliver an end-to-end programme that balanced pace with robust decision-making.

Together, SFT and Creative Scotland designed a comprehensive funding journey, covering eligibility, expressions of interest, detailed applications, assessment, awards, project initiation, monitoring and evaluation.

In addition, they co-designed the two-stage digital application process, assessment criteria and governance arrangements, creating a clear framework for decision-making between the two organisations.



Throughout the assessment process, they reviewed proposals, facilitated joint assessment panels and challenged applicants to demonstrate:

- A clear climate adaptation need
- Realistic project scope and costs
- Deliverability within programme timescales
- Measurable benefits for buildings, organisations and communities

This process helped distinguish genuine climate adaptation projects from routine maintenance, carbon reduction initiatives or wider capital ambitions. In several cases, applicants refined and narrowed their proposals, ensuring funding was directed towards interventions that would deliver the greatest resilience within the available budget.

Beyond project assessment, SFT also supported recommendation reporting, applicant communications, award documentation and project inception. We helped establish a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning framework, linking individual projects to a broader evidence base on organisational capacity, asset stewardship and future investment needs across Scotland's cultural infrastructure.



£57,000

AWARDED TO DANCE BASE FOR CLIMATE
ENHANCEMENTS TO BUILDINGS

Results achieved

The Pathfinder programme has revealed both the scale of climate risk facing Scotland's cultural estate and the significant demand for practical adaptation support.

The programme attracted 38 expressions of interest from organisations spanning 19 local authority areas, demonstrating widespread need across the sector. Following assessment, [eight project were selected](#) to received funding, ranging from island and rural venues to historic buildings and major city arts organisations. Together they address a wide range of climate risks, including flooding, coastal change, heavier rainfall, high winds and overheating, with interventions such as improved drainage, roofing, ventilation, insulation, shading and heating and cooling systems.

Beyond the projects themselves, the programme has generated valuable new intelligence. For the first time, Creative Scotland and SFT have developed a detailed picture of the climate adaptation challenges facing Scotland's cultural buildings, providing an evidence base to inform future policy and investment.

The structured application process has also improved project quality and investment readiness. By requiring organisations to clearly evidence climate risks, define project scope and demonstrate expected outcomes, applicants have developed more robust and deliverable proposals, increasing confidence that limited funding will achieve maximum benefit.

Perhaps most importantly, the programme has established a repeatable partnership model that combines Creative Scotland's sector knowledge, climate adaption and grant-making expertise with SFT's infrastructure, investment and asset management capability. As funded projects are completed during 2026–27, the monitoring and evaluation programme will measure improvements in building resilience, continuity of cultural services and organisational capacity, while capturing lessons that can shape future investment across Scotland's cultural estate.



This inaugural funding from a brand-new collaboration between Creative Scotland and Scottish Futures Trust will drive tangible results and increased understanding of the impact of the changing climate on Scotland's cultural and creative estate. Adapting to our changing climate is essential to enable a thriving Scotland and these pathfinder projects will pave the way in doing so. We hope that this first step together will provide insight into current and future challenges of creative and cultural buildings, the organisations and activities they host, and the joint effort needed to address them.

KAREN RIDGEWELL, CLIMATE EMERGENCY & SUSTAINABILITY LEAD,
CREATIVE SCOTLAND

Dance Base in Edinburgh was awarded over £57k to draught proof, insulate and improve heating to keep its studios comfortable and usable for dancers and artists.